

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 RSC-01

CIEP-01 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 L-02

COME-00 OPIC-03 OES-03 CU-02 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 /066 W

----- 071502

R 061640Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7861

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0075

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, TS, US

SUBJECT: U.S.-TUNISIA JOINT COMMISSION

REF: (A) STATE 278642; (B) TUNIS 7074

1. SUMMARY: GOT SEEMS TO FAVOR BROAD MANDATE FOR JOINT COMMISSION. PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA EXPRESSED THIS VIEW TO AMBASSADOR. SYMBOLIC ASPECT APPEARS TO BE CENTRAL TO TUNISIAN THINKING. AMBASSADOR EXPECTS TO MEET SHORTLY WITH FROEIGN MINISTER CHATTI TO DISCUSS DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSAL FOR LIMITED MANDATE. END SUMMARY

2. EMBASSY HAD DELAYED RESPONDING TO REFTEL A PENDING FURTHER SOUNDINGS ON JOINT COMMISSION CONCEPT WITH KEY TUNISIAN OFFICIALS.FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI, WHO ORIGINALLY BROACHED SUBJECT TO SECRETARY, HAS BEEN OUT OF TOWN. HE HAS NOW RETURNED, AND AMBASSADOR IS SEEKING EARLY APPOINTMENT WITH HIM. WE ARE ALSO TOUCHING BASE ELSEWHERE.

3. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA HAS EXPRESSED HIMSELF IN FAVOR OF STRUCTURING JOINT COMMISSION SO AS TO ENCOMPASS BROAD SPECTRUM OF U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONSHIP (TUNIS 7677). WE BELIEVE THAT
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CHATTI SHARES THIS VIEW, AND THATTHIS IS WHAT HE HAD IN

MIND WHEN HE PROPOSED FORMATION OF JOINT COMMISSION TO SECRETARY DURING LATTER'S VISIT HERE IN NOVEMBER. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT CHATTI INTERPRETED SECRETARY'S ACCEPTANCE OF HIS PROPOSITION AS AN AGREEMENT TO BROAD SPECTRUM APPROACH.(TIME DID NOT RPT NOT PERMIT A DISCUSSION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE.)

4. TUNISIA'S PRINCIPAL INTEREST IN FORMATION OF JOINT COMMISSION IS TO CEMENT A LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP, TO WHICH TUNISIANS ATTACH CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE. SYMBOLIC ASPECT APPEARS TO BE CENTRAL TO TUNISIAN THINKING. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT GOT WILL ACCEPT A JOINT COMMISSION MANDATE WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS IGNORES TWIN PILLARS OF OUR LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP: ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE.

5. WHILE WE AGREE THAT PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF COMMISSION SHOULD BE ON AREA OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT, THERE IS PERHAPS A PITFALL FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT IN LIMITING COMMISSION'S PURVIEW TO THIS AREA ALONE. SUBSTANTIAL RPT SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS IN THIS AREA IS NOT RPT NOT CERTAIN AND, IN ANY CASE, THIS AREA IS LARGELY OUTSIDE GOVERNMENT CONTROL. THUS, THERE IS NO ASSURANCE THAT PROPOSED LIMITED JOINT COMMISSION WOULD FURTHER AIM OF "REGISTERING CONCRETE AND VISIBLE PROGRESS" (PARA 5, REFTEL A). ON OTHER HAND, INCLUDING AREAS OF U.S. ACTIVITY WHERE THERE IS PROVEN AND CONTINUING ACHIEVEMENT (I.E. ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE; CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS; AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION) EMPHASIZES AND POINTS UP USG ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON BEHALF OF TUNISIA.

6. IN OUR VIEW, POSSIBLE PROBLEM OF RAISED TUNISIAN EXPECTATIONS FLOWING FROM COMMISSION'S EXISTENCE IS MANAGEABLE. GOT HAS ALREADY DEVELOPED A NETWORK OF JOINT COMMISSIONS WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES, FEW OF WHOM HAVE INCREASED THEIR ASSISTANCE UNDER THE AEGIS OF JOINT COMMISSION. WE ARE NOT RPT NOT AWARE OF SERIOUS TUNISIAN COMPLAINTS ON THIS SCORE. IN FACT, IT IS MY IMPRESSION, FOLLOWING TALKS WITH FELLOW AMBASSADORS WHOSE COUNTRIES PARTICIPATE IN SUCH COMMISSIONS, THAT FORM (I.E. EXISTENCE OF COMMISSION) IS IN MANY RESPECTS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SUBSTANCE.

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7. IN SUM, WE DO NOT FAVOR TRUNCATED MANDATE PROPOSED BY DEPARTMENT, NOR DO WE EXPECT GOT ACCEPTANCE. NEVERTHELESS, IN VIEW OF HIGH LEVEL DECISION IN DEPARTMENT TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION, WE WILL PROCEED TO DISCUSS DEPT'S PROPOSAL IN PRELIMINARY FASHION WITH GOT OFFICIALS. AMBASSADOR HOPES TO MEET THIS WEEK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN INVESTMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION, COMMITTEE MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TUNIS00075
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750005-0346
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750174/aaaacnmj.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 278642, 75 TUNIS 7074
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <05 DEC 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: U.S.-TUNISIA JOINT COMMISSION
TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, TS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006